ENGLISH BLOGS: CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER IDENTITY IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

English blogs has become one of the fastest growing genres in Computer-Mediated-Communication (CMC). It is widely used by people to connect globally and it has now become a popular form of communication among Malaysians of various ages. The population of blogs is increasing rapidly with the growing numbers of web hosts. Thus, the issue of gender identity becomes a social concern. This study examines both linguistic and non-linguistic features that construct the gender identity of the blog writers in English among Malaysians. Gender has always been associated with the different genres of discourses and it is also reflected in Internet blogging. As the real identity of the writer is often not revealed in blog writing, this may lead to unclear gender identification. This paper consists of 20 participants. 10 males and 10 females participated in the study. The data was collected with consent from the blog writers. The English blogs were analyzed by examining the lexical, syntactic, and semiotic features that signal the writer’s gender identity. The analysis was mainly focused on greetings, leave takings, expressions, emoticons, punctuation marks, and the length of sentences. The preliminary findings of the study show that both young male and female adults present themselves similarly in their blogs specifically in the syntactic level. However, the lexical and semiotic features vary in presenting themselves according to their gender. It is found that males have the tendency to use more vulgar languages whereas females are more likely to use emoticons to express their emotions. Generally, the construction of gender identity is reflected in the writer’s lexical choices, non-verbal cues, and structural features used in their writings.